

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Tara McGuinness

June 14, 2005

Mark Bayer

(202) 225-2836

REPS. MARKEY, LYNCH SEEK PROBE INTO ENTRY OF CHAINSAW-TOTING CONVICTED CRIMINAL INTO U.S.

Man apprehended in Massachusetts after being permitted to cross border in Maine

Washington, DC: Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, and Rep. Stephen Lynch (D-MA), a member of the House Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Affairs, today sent a letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff seeking answers on why Customs and Border Protection (CBP) inspectors at the Calais, Maine border crossing permitted an individual convicted of assault and carrying a cache of weapons to enter the United States in April. The individual, Gregory Despres, was scheduled to be sentenced in a Canadian court on assault charges the day he crossed the border in Maine, and on the day after he crossed the border, he was named a prime suspect in a gruesome double murder in Canada. He was arrested in Mattapoisett, Massachusetts, his last known address, and currently is being held on murder charges.

"It's outrageous that a chainsaw-toting convicted criminal claiming to be a Marine working on President Bush's security detail was allowed to enter the United States. The bizarre story he spun for Customs inspectors at the border should have raised enough suspicions to prompt inspectors either to arrest him or deny him entry into the United States. We were fortunate that this individual was not a terrorist determined to attack our country and that he was apprehended in Massachusetts before he could cause further harm," Rep. Markey said.

Congressman Stephen F. Lynch said, "What Congressman Markey and I are requesting is an official report from the Secretary of Homeland Security that details whether proper security measures were indeed taken here, and whether we should require agents to take further steps when dealing with suspicious persons like Mr. Despres in the future."

The letter asks Secretary Chertoff to respond to a series of questions, including:

- Were CBP inspectors at the Calais crossing aware that Mr. Despres had already been convicted of assault and was due in court to be sentenced for that assault on the day he appeared at the border crossing?
- Did CBP inspectors seek criminal history information about Mr. Despres from Canadian or U.S. law enforcement officials prior to letting him enter the U.S? If not, why not?
- What steps did CBP inspectors take to confirm his story that he was a Marine working on President Bush's security detail?

- Is it the position of the Department of Homeland Security that inspectors at the Calais crossing properly handled the situation involving this individual? If not, what training or other reforms will the Department implement to ensure that CBP inspectors at our borders respond appropriately if similar situations occur in the future?

“The letter we are sending today seeks an investigation into this disturbing case and a review of entry procedures in place at the border. Giving the green light to this deranged individual to enter our country raises serious questions about these procedures, which should be adjusted to prevent a recurrence of such an incident in the future,” Rep. Markey concluded.

For a copy of the letter, please visit www.house.gov/markey

###